The Watanuki Kannonyama Mound and the Korean Peninsula

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The Watanuki Kannonyama Tumulus in Takasaki City, Gunma Prefecture, well-known throughout the country, is a keyhole-shaped tumulus typical of the Kanto region during the second half of the sixth century. Since 1968, a series of excavations have revealed abundant, well-preserved luxurious burial treasures in the horizontal stone chamber in the rear circle. The contents suggest a strong relationship with the Korean Peninsula (especially, with the Baekje, Silla, and Gaya regions in the south), and they are an excellent group of artifacts that could have only been created by highly skilled artisans. We can imagine a deep connection between the tumulus and the people of the Korean Peninsula involved with it.

There has been a great deal of interest in the burial treasure found in the stone chamber. However, there have not been many opportunities to examine the genealogical aspects of the stone chamber and the background of the construction since the research has not gone beyond the identification of the chamber's structural features. In this paper, I have placed these issues as the central subject.

The horizontal stone chamber of the Kannonyama Mound is from the transitional period of horizontal stone chambers starting around the late fifth century/early sixth century in the Kamitsukeno region, and it is notable for its heterogeneous and unique features. Its main construction material is hornblende andesite, erupted from the Haruna volcano in the second quarter of the sixth century, and it has been called a “hornblende andesite stone chamber masonry laid with cur rocks” (Ozaki, 1966; Migishima, 1993). The stone chamber is not limited to the Kannonyama Mound; we can also find numerous stone chambers in the chief tumuli in the surrounding areas. Moreover, we can see remarkable evidence of the colors of the Korean Peninsula in the burial treasure of each tumulus. One example is the Sanno Gold Crown Tumulus in Maebashi City from which a Sillan-made gold-copper crown was excavated. We can assume that there is a strong connection among these tumuli around the Kannonyama Mound.

The direct relationship between the Kamitsukeno region and the Korean Peninsula dates back to the fifth century (Gunma Prefectural Museum of History, 2017). It is known that many foreigners were welcomed in the region, and they were involved in activities such as organized horse breeding. The hosts were the chieftains of the central and western part of the region. There are many artifacts made
with the leading technologies from Gaya and Silla among the burial treasure of the Ide Futagoyama (or twin peaks) Mound, which became the beginning of the formation of a group of the Baekje mounds.

Moreover, there is evidence of a direct relationship between the horizontal stone chamber of the Maefutago Mound in Maebashi City and the stone chamber no. 1 of the Goseong-gun Songhak-dong 1 B in western Gaya. Such a relationship between the two regions is significant. When taking into account the archaeological and historical circumstances surrounding the Kannonyama Mound, we can see a strong affinity between its horizontal stone chamber and those in the southwest Gaya region. It is possible to explore the background of the establishment of the relationship from its connection with the south of the Peninsula concerning the various elements that form the Kannonyama Mound.

Key words: Kamitsukeno region, Korean Peninsula, Watanuki Kannonyama Mound, Korean-type burial treasure, hornblende andesite stone chamber masonry laid with cur rocks, old Tosando routes, Western Gaya